

**WORLD'S FASTEST
STREET BUG?**



VW Trends

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HEBMÜLLER HIJINKS
JOLLY GOOD SHOWS
A GOOD THING GOING

**WINE-COUNTRY
WINNER**



BoB found this "strange" single-owner VW parked at a gas station in Germany in 1970. He was eventually able to buy it for \$230.

WAIT, I BOUGHT A... WHAT?!?!

BoB Gilmore's \$230 '49 Hebmüller (yes, you read that right).

By Dan Leadbetter

BoB Gilmore's one of those guys that has been around the VW scene since about forever. Back in the day BoB was a contributor to *VW Trends* as our go-to toy aficionado and our vintage detective. He's been interested in vintage VWs for more than 52 years and still enjoys many aspects of the hobby, especially the KdF-Wagen era and vintage VW models and toys. BoB is a great guy to talk to has an incredible wealth of knowledge to share. But a lot of people don't know the

story behind BoB's '49 Hebmüller.

The story starts in 1970 when BoB was in the U.S. Army, stationed in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany, where he would help one of his Army buddies work on a '49 Split Window. One day, while driving the countryside in his '66 1300 Beetle, BoB pulled into an ESSO gas station in the town of Göggingen. He noticed a strange-looking Volkswagen convertible parked beside the gas station. He didn't know what it was, but saw it

VOLKSWAGENWERK
ARTIENGESellschaft

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Bankkonten: Commerzbank AG, Wuppertal
Deutsche Bank AG, Wuppertal
Deutsche Bank AG, Wuppertal
Hamburger Landesbank
Giroverkehrs-Verbindung

WES ZICKER WES HANDELMOT VON WES KASSEPAUSE WES BUCHEN 2180 WOLFARBURG
Sept. 11, 1972 22 - 3160 1949/2-Hebe Oct. 10, 1972
Customer Relations

Dear Mr. Gilmore,

Thank you for your recent letter.

We were able to dig up from our archives the following information about your Hebmüller Convertible:

Serial No. 1-0 126 410
Motor No. 0 157 433
Type 14 2-Seater Convertible
Colour Coral red
Delivery date Nov. 30, 1949.

It might interest you to know that independently from Volkswagen, the body firm Hebmüller in Wülfrath/Thain had built during 1949-1951 700 of these small convertibles. In 1951 the company burst down, and Volkswagen was not interested in investing in its reconstruction.

Later on Karman started to build the 4-seater, which was a resumption of the Hebmüller Convertible, so to speak.

All available information material of this type car, as well as the older model year Volkswagens, such as photocopied pictures and pamphlets have been sent to you by separate air mail.

HEBMÜLLER PRODUCTION NUMBER 14-00258 AUFBAU NUMBER 19160-2511

BoB wrote to Volkswagenwerk to see if they could provide any information. Yeah, nothing to see here other than BoB's car is an uber-rare Hebmüller, serial number 1-0 126 410, delivered November 30, 1949!

had the same dashboard as his friend's '49, so it had to be pretty old.

Over the next few months, BoB kept going back to the gas station inquiring about the old VW. Finally, the owner sold it to him for 800DM (which was equivalent to \$230 back then).

Even though he didn't know what this faded, patina-laden, kinda black, yellow, and rusty red VW was, the one thing BoB *did* know was he was now the second owner. The VW had lost its valid German



Once he had the Heb back home in San Diego, BoB's search for restoration parts began.



Here's a picture of BoB in 1971 working on his Heb. At this point, he still had no idea what his \$230 bought!



By 1975, the Hebmüller was near completion with the exception of the 16-inch wheels and bumper braces.

registration and couldn't be driven on the road unless repairs were made (and because it didn't have a motor). BoB found himself liking the car more and more as he worked to get it ready to ship back to the U.S. of A.

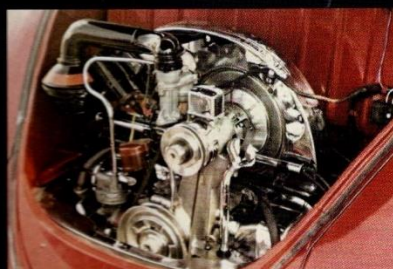
BoB acquired a run-down '50 Split Window with no valid registration for \$25 — I know, these prices are killing me — and secretly drove it home late at night. He removed and rebuilt the 25hp motor for his funny-looking convertible. He did some minor body work and painted the car with a red-oxide primer. BoB knew that if the old VW looked okay and had the basics in place (tires, lights, brakes, etc.), he could get it registered more leniently with a U.S. Army personal vehicle inspection. After he received his U.S. Army license plates, he was able to ship the car back home to San Diego, California, in 1972. He registered it with personalized blue-and-yellow California plates reading "MY 49 VW."

Next BoB started searching for information about the car (remember, this was before Google; every bit of correspondence was done through the postal service). He penned a letter to Volkswagenwerks, Germany, for additional information on VW serial number 1-0126410. You can imagine his surprise when he got a letter back stating that he was the owner of a very rare '49 Hebmüller VW Convertible, number 14-00258, of which only 700 were produced! HOLY CRAP!

While looking for original parts, BoB met other vintage VW enthusiasts. He started making friends, who helped him get an understanding of what was original for this '49 Hebmüller.



This is what separates the Bugs from the Hebs: From the lines of the VW, you kinda can't tell if it's coming or going!



BoB bought a 1950 Split Window for \$25 to get a donor motor to rebuild for the Heb. The chrome and the Bus air cleaner are definitely NOT stock, but look amazing nonetheless!

The letter from Volkswagenwerks also stated that his VW was originally painted a coral red color. BoB thought that color had a pastel look that he wasn't too fond of, and decided to paint the car another stock VW color, Ruby Red (L456).

After several years of restoration, the Hebmüller was still not quite finished to BoB's liking, as he was still missing one component: a set of five 16-inch rims and tires. At that time, the editor of *Volkswa-*

gen Greats magazine contacted BoB and wanted to feature his Hebmüller, but BoB told him the car was not finished yet. The magazine guy persisted (as we oft do) and finally convinced BoB to do a photoshoot, which landed his Heb on the cover of the April 1975 issue of *Volkswagen Greats*. The editor also asked if BoB would write a column called the "Vintage Voice." This was the start of BoB writing articles for various VW magazines around the world, which he still does today.

During this time, BoB saw a need for vintage VW enthusiasts to come together. He had become good friends with Bill Pickering, who was from the East Coast, and BoB was, of course, on the West Coast. Together, they formed the Vintage Volkswagen Club of America (VWVCA) in 1976. Each month they produced a newsletter for members, with Bill and BoB alternating monthly responsibilities.

In February 1976, with the Hebmüller's restoration finally finished, BoB entered it in its first ever VWVCA show at the Don Sharp VW dealership in Oceanside, California. BoB enjoyed driving it to VW shows and became really hooked on vintage Volkswagens. He used his rare Hebmüller to open doors with VW dealerships in the San Diego and Los Angeles areas for VWVCA club sponsorships and meeting places.

BoB also had an interest in locating and documenting the other Hebmüllers in the world, so he helped form the Hebmüller VW Type 14A Registry, with owners' names and photos of their cars in a large 3-ring binder.

There were approximately 696 Hebmüller VW Type 14A vehicles produced



The all-red paint really wasn't working for BoB, so one afternoon he decided to add Ivory side panels to his VW... which he did in his garage!

(the exact number isn't known for sure). Today, 157 examples remain.

The original metal Hebmüller emblems (which were typically installed on the right front quarter panel) were usually corroded or missing, so BoB created a repro emblem made from zinc that was available to Hebmüller owners in the Registry.

In May 1976, after seeing the two-tone paint schemes on VW Convertibles at car shows, BoB decided to paint the sides of his Heb an ivory color, Elfenbein L201 — in his own garage one afternoon! BoB couldn't believe what a difference it made. The color combo just popped!

A couple of years later, *Hot VWs* magazine started an annual vintage issue, and BoB's Hebmüller landed on the front cover in June 1983. The August 1985 issue of *VW Trends* featured his Hebmüller in the Vintage Detective article. Then in November 1988 the Heb was on the cover and featured inside the French magazine *Super VW*. It was also in Colin Burnham's book *Classic Volkswagens*. If you happen to pick up a book published by Neko Publishing in 1990 titled *Encyclopedia of Classic Volkswagens*, you'll come across a 3-page spread on BoB's Hebmüller.

After having the pleasure of driving,

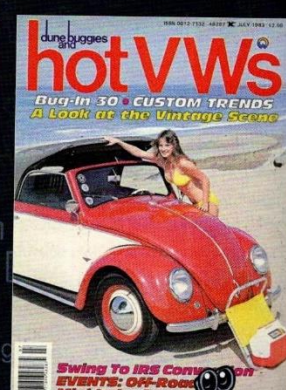
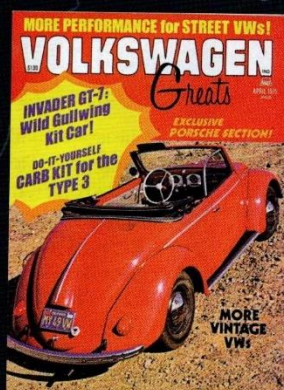
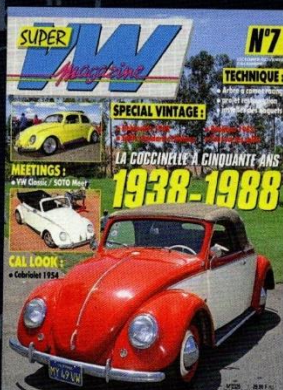


The super-clean interior looks like it just rolled off the assembly line!

showing, and making friends with his Hebmüller for 27 years, BoB decided it was time to let someone else have the same enjoyment. So in 1997, BoB sold it to Mr. Toshio Fujii of Japan. Like any parent, BoB made sure his rare VW was going to a good home, and is secure in knowing that Hebmüller 14-00258 is doing just fine with its proud third owner in a new location. The Hebmüller was driven to VW car shows in Japan for another 15 years. Sadly, the 25hp motor failed. BoB is still in communication with Mr. Fujii, and has seen various photos of his VW currently under a total restoration project. Those photos can be seen at www.hebmuller-registry.com.

So, kids, the moral of this story is ALWAYS keep your eyes and ears open. You just never know when you'll stumble across a rare vintage VW for \$200, and how it might change the course of your life. Our man BoB is living proof of that.

VW



With a VW this cool, you know the magazines will come a runnin'! BoB's Heb has been featured in *Hot VWs*, *Super VW*, *Volkswagen Greats*, *VW Trends*, and many others.

